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Malays must have the knowledge to face globalisation, says Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight Malays must have the necessary knowledge to face globalisation, defend the country's independence as well as their race and religion.

He said compared to the days before and just after independence when the Malays had very little opportunity to pursue higher education, they now had various chances.

"I am stressing the importance of us acquiring knowledge," Dr Mahathir said in his speech at a dinner held by former medical, dentistry and pharmacy students of Egyptian universities.

He said Malay nationalists had planned that priority should be given to providing higher education for Malays when they came to power.

Dr Mahathir said Malay students then were grateful for the chance to study and studied well.

"But the appreciation later deteriorated," he said, adding that some people even felt that studying in fields like medicine and engineering was not Islamic.

"I want to stress that studying science is equally as important as studying Islam," Dr Mahathir said.

He said if Muslims did not study fields like medicine and engineering they would not have the capacity to look after themselves and would have to depend on others, citing the areas of health and military readiness as examples.

"If all of us studied only religion, we would be totally helpless.

"There would be no doctors to treat us or engineers to build the things we need," Dr Mahathir said.

He said one could be religious while still discharging duties as a professional.

"A professional duty is also ibadat," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the younger generation did not seem to understand the importance of acquiring knowledge.

"I believe that the Malays have the mental capacity to do anything. That is why we have 'Malaysia Boleh'. It is not an empty slogan," he said.

Dr Mahathir said although Arab countries now held Malaysia as a model, what had been achieved was not enough.

He called on Muslims to be serious about everything in the face of globalisation.

"The whole Malay population must have the knowledge to face globalisation.

"We are facing a serious challenge and if we fail we may have to wait another 450 years to be independent," Dr Mahathir said.

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